

Message from Commissioner Nancy Navarretta



April is Alcohol Awareness Month, which is a good time to reflect on our drinking patterns and the role that alcohol plays in our lives. Most adults in the United States who drink alcohol drink moderately and without complications. However, Alcohol Use Disorder affects about 15 million adults in the United States, and an estimated 88,000 people die from alcohol-related causes annually, making alcohol the third leading preventable cause of death in the nation. Across all active clients in DMHAS-funded and operated treatment related (substance use and mental health) programs, alcohol was the most frequently reported primary drug (36%) at the time of admission. How do you know if drinking alcohol has become a problem for you or a loved one and where do you go for help if it has? Read on for more information and resources.

This month we will also preview National Prevention Week (NPW). Taking place from May 8-14, NPW brings together statewide stakeholders to raise awareness about the importance of substance use prevention and positive mental health. The three primary goals of NPW are community involvement, partner engagement, and resource sharing. Visit www.ctclearinghouse.org/npw to learn more about NPW in Connecticut.

Learning to cope with stress and finding healthy ways to deal with it can go a long way towards living a healthy and positive life. **Stress Awareness Month** has been recognized every April since 1992, but this year it seems particularly important. Stress can cause physical, emotional and behavioral disorders which can affect your health as well as personal and professional relationships. Too much stress can cause relatively minor illnesses like insomnia, backaches, or headaches, and can contribute to potentially life-threatening diseases like high blood pressure and heart disease.

Here are some basic tips for coping with stress:

- **Self care:** Eat healthy, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, take a break if you feel stressed.
- **Talk it out:** Share how you are feeling and coping with a family member, friend, doctor, pastor or counselor.
- **Avoid drugs and alcohol:** These can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
- **Recognize when you need more help:** Talk to a psychologist, social worker or counselor if things continue.

Take this [free stress screener](#) from Mental Health America to see if stress is adversely impacting you.

Spotlight: Aisha S. Hamid, MPH, CHES, CPS, Program Manager, Connecticut Center for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery, Wheeler Clinic/Connecticut Clearinghouse



Aisha has been the Program Manager of Connecticut Clearinghouse since 2012. In her role, she directs the daily operations of the state's DMHAS-funded library and resource center on substance use, mental health, and related topics. The Clearinghouse collection includes pamphlets, posters, fact sheets, books, videos and curricula on a wide variety of prevention, mental health promotion, harm reduction, early intervention, treatment and recovery topics. In addition to her responsibilities managing the library and resource center, Aisha directs the statewide DMHAS Tobacco Merchant and Community Education initiative as well as numerous other prevention, health promotion and training programs.

[Click to visit the Connecticut Clearinghouse website](#)

What do you love most about your job?

I have been in my current position for almost ten years and I enjoy every minute of my work. Work is never boring or stagnant, there's always something new. I like the variety of DMHAS-funded projects that I have the opportunity to be engaged in, and the work environment and culture of kindness at Wheeler (especially at our office in the Clearinghouse). I also enjoy the collaboration with other DMHAS Prevention Resource Links and community partners, the day-to-day interaction with the patrons and community members, and the guidance received from the DMHAS Prevention and Health Promotion Division staff.

Are there any challenges?

Challenges are what makes this job interesting for me, whether it is launching a new resource van, moving to a virtual environment, or supporting the community during COVID. I am blessed with a wonderful team that has a solution-oriented, customer service approach. Working together, nothing seems impossible.

National Prevention Week kicks off on May 8, why is it so important and how can people get involved?

National Prevention Week (NPW) provides us an opportunity to show coordinated prevention efforts, celebrate our successes, and tell our story of why prevention is important. There are many ways to get involved and participate in different activities. Families can attend the statewide prevention event on May 14 at the Sacred Heart University Discovery Museum in Bridgeport. It will be a fun day to learn about prevention while also meeting our new prevention mascot, Starfish Stella! People can also share social media messages posted on the [NPW Facebook page](#). NPW can also be used as a time to start our resolutions for quitting or reducing risky behaviors associated with substance use, adopting healthy behaviors for mental health promotion, starting and keeping a list of important phone numbers and resources handy, and contacting the CT Clearinghouse at 1-800-232-4424 or visiting the [website](#) for resources and information.



Underage drinking is a serious problem. Alcohol is the most commonly used and misused drug among youth in the U.S. The average girl has her first drink at age 13 and for boys, it's age 11. It can also have long-term effects: youth who start drinking before age 15 are six times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or misuse later in life than those who begin drinking at or after age 21.

SAMHSA's national substance use prevention campaign, titled "[Talk. They Hear You.](#)" helps parents and caregivers start talking with their children early about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs.

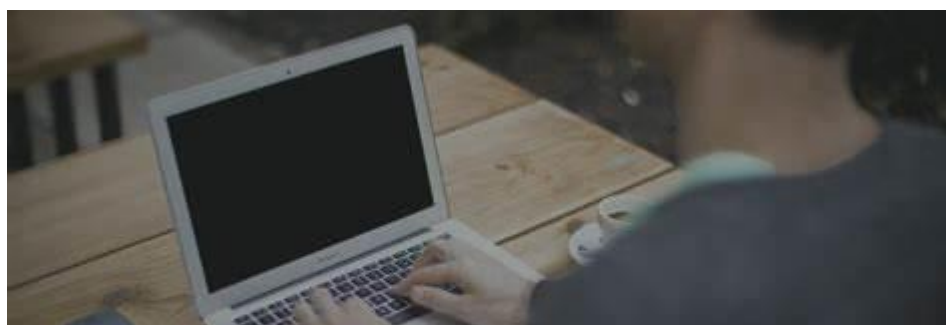
[DMHAS Pretrial Intervention Program \(PTIP\), Alcohol Education Program \(AEP\) and Drug Education Program \(DEP\)](#)

The Office of Pretrial Interventions operates two programs to serve people referred by the court:

The **Pretrial Alcohol Education Program (PAEP)** is available to persons arrested for the first time for operating a motor vehicle, boat, all-terrain vehicle, or snowmobile under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (often called OUI, DUI, DWI).

The **Pretrial Drug Education Program (PDEP)** is available to persons arrested for possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia. The program may be used twice and, with the court's permission, a third time. PDEP is a contracted program overseen by DMHAS that includes a clinical evaluation by a substance abuse professional, which results in a report, with recommendations, to the referring court.

If you are curious about your drinking, [take this short quiz](#) to weigh your drinking habits against guidelines for lower-risk drinking. The screener is fast, free, and anonymous.



Rethinking Drinking is a resource to help people assess their consumption, and find research-based guidance on cutting back.

Visit [Rethinking Drinking](#) for more information.

In the news...

[No Amount of Alcohol Benefits the Heart: Why Women's Drinking is of Particular Concern \(TODAY Show\)](#)

[What's Driving the Dramatic Rise in Alcohol-Related Deaths During the Pandemic? \(PBS News Hour\)](#)



MAY 8-14 2022



Strengthen
COMMUNITY



Build
RESILIENCE



Create
HOPE

National Prevention Week is a national public education platform bringing together communities and organizations to raise awareness about the importance of substance use prevention and positive mental health. Each year, National Prevention Week includes daily themes to focus on major substance use and mental health topics.

The 2022 daily themes are:

Monday, May 9: Strengthening Community Resilience: Substance Misuse and Overdose Prevention

Tuesday, May 10: Preventing Substance Use and Promoting Mental Health in Youth

Wednesday, May 11: Preventing Suicide: Everyone Plays a Role

Thursday, May 12: The Talent Pipeline: Enhancing the Prevention Workforce

Friday, May 13: Prevention is Everywhere: Highlighting Efforts Across Settings and Communities

Saturday, May 14: Celebrating Prevention Heroes

Visit the [CT Clearinghouse NPW page](#) for more information!

Join us for the Connecticut NPW Event on Saturday, May 14, from 10 AM - 2 PM at the [Sacred Heart University Discovery Science Center and Planetarium](#) (4450 Park Ave., Bridgeport). Starfish Stella, the prevention mascot for Connecticut, will be on hand as well as many other special guests!



The Change the Script mobile resource van will be sharing prevention resources during NPW. [Click here](#) to view the calendar.

Use the hashtag #PreventionHappensHereCT for all National Prevention Week-related social media posts and follow along to see what's happening here in Connecticut. [CT Prevention Week Facebook Page](#)